



Newfoundland Club of New England Rescue and Referral Service

RESCUE DOG FOSTERING 101

Introduction

(In this writing we will refer to the foster dog as “he/him/his” regardless of sex)

So you are thinking of fostering a dog. Congratulations! You could possibly be entering into one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. But, if you’re picturing a dog coming into your home, melding perfectly and immediately into your surroundings without a hitch, STOP HERE! Fostering probably isn’t for you. Although we do get well-adjusted dogs that seem flawless, it is not the norm. Most rescue dogs have been abused. Sometimes physically, but more often mentally. This includes all types of neglect. Some have never been secure in their environment, some have never bonded with anyone. Some have never had the proper training and exercise, became unruly, and were discarded.

Regardless of what the reason is for the dog coming into rescue, it is our job as fosters to observe and identify any issues the dogs may have and then find ways to start to overcome these issues. The dog will need to be in a home where they can feel safe and secure. You will need to create a bond with these dogs. You may need to teach these dogs simple commands such as Sit and Stay. Most dogs will also need to learn to walk properly on a leash. You should start to work on training these dogs so they can become the well-adjusted dogs we all would want to own.

When you are fostering, you will need to share with the adopters everything you have learned about your dog so they can continue the process of healing our furry friends and form a successful relationship. Your role as the dog’s “person” is to provide the tools, resources and training, to help these dogs cope and be happy in the world that you’ve selected for them. This all takes work, but it is a labor of love.

FIRST SEVEN DAYS

This is only a guide, each dog will need to be treated independently. Some will move quicker in the process, some much slower.

The first week is crucial for the success of your dog.



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INTRODUCTIONS

Yard-When your rescue arrives at your home, you will want to let it inspect the yard. Walk the dog around the yard (leashed). Let him take in the smells and go to the bathroom. A lot of dogs will mark (pee on) anything they can. This is normal. Especially if you have resident pets or other fosters.

Dogs-If you do have other dogs, this is when I like to do first introductions as long as there is not a reproduction risk. This is best done in a neutral area like a front yard. First, keep the dogs about 10 to 15 feet apart, and walk across the space parallel to one another. Again, pay attention to their body language. If both dogs are showing relaxed social behaviors, gradually reduce the distance between them until they're walking beside one another. Both dogs should have loose postures throughout the process, and if things are going well you might see a few play bows—you know, the “bum in the air, elbows on the ground” stance that's an invitation to play. Observe both dogs for improper reactions and **body cues**. Focused, hard stares; slow, tense movements; or freezing in place are warning signs that things might be moving too quickly. If you're concerned about the body language you're seeing during the introductory stages, consider increasing the distance between the dogs and slowing down the greeting process. Remember: It's better to move too slowly than too fast. Be ready to separate them. You do not want to let them have the freedom to interact as they please for several days.

Leave a 6' leash on the foster at all times until you know how your foster dog will react in different situations. It may be crucial to be able to pull him out of harm's way, pull him out of a dog fight, or stop him from darting out the front door. NEVER grab and pull on an unfamiliar dogs collar without a leash, it is a sure way to get bitten. Especially if two dogs are fighting. Please be sensitive to the fact that, to a dog, being on a leash is a disadvantage for them and can make them vulnerable towards other dogs, especially ones that are not leashed.

Home- After dog's first introductions are over, it's time for him to be introduced to his new home. Walk the dog around the house once or twice while the other dogs are still outside. Show the dog his bed (freshly cleaned with no other dog odors) and room or crate the dog will sleep in. This will be the dogs “Safe Space”. It is crucial a foster has a place that is secure and it can call its own. It is counting on you to keep it this way for a while.

KEEP IT LOW KEY

It is crucial in the first week that your foster's environment be kept low key and relaxed. Your foster's world has been turned upside down and it was thrown into this new, unknown environment. Give him a chance to get used to it before adding stimulation. Solo



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walks, minimum play, only people living in home should interact, no car rides, no interactions with other dogs are “musts”. Interaction with household dogs should be kept to a minimum. Chew toys, sticks, and bones are great for relieving anxiety and keeping them occupied during this time.

BONDING

Bonding with any dog is crucial for its well-being. Bonding with a human is one of the most simple, most natural things a dog will do, even if it was neglected and has never bonded with anyone before. A bond is created simply by interacting with the dog. The more interaction there is, the stronger the bond will be. Start by sitting quietly and gently stroking and petting the dog. Keep from patting or rough housing with the dog. Let him come to you. Don't pull the dog or force it at first. You need to build trust. Look relaxingly into the dog's eyes while speaking gently. Eye contact is SO important to dogs. Give him a treat or two while doing all this. Treats give pleasure, reward, and let them know your hand will provide for them. Other ways to bond with them are, sitting with them, speaking to them, training, and playing with them. Once that bond (trust) is created, the training and everything else gets easier.

FEEDINGS

This is not a puppy you know the entire background of. Many rescue dogs have issues surrounding food from various experiences like starvation or having to hunt for food. They can easily view other dogs or even you as someone who may take their last meal from them. If this is the case, time, training and trust building are the path to overcoming it. Since you don't have those yet you must take it slow for now. This is the same for treats and bones. Give your foster a safe space to enjoy their meal. If there is food aggression or resource guarding, begin working with a trainer immediately. Don't test these boundaries in the beginning. Do not drop food or treats on the floor that your dogs might compete over. Remove all food dishes before letting the dogs interact again after meals.

CHILDREN

Don't leave kids alone with your new dog. For the first few weeks, your dog is going to be stressed just from the fact he has moved to a new place he is not familiar with... add a child that just wants to hug and kiss the dog, and it's a recipe for disaster (i.e. dog bite). Even the nicest dog can bite out of fear and protection. Teach your children to properly approach and greet strange dogs and also teach them proper dog etiquette. It could save a dog's life.



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SETTING BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Setting boundaries and expectations is very important for you, and your foster's happiness. A lot of these dogs have never had any boundaries and they will quickly test to see what they can get away with. It is your job to set expectations. You are the human, you are the Pack Leader (*see definition below). They are the dog. You need to earn your dog's trust, loyalty, love, and respect before they will look to you as their leader and you do this by giving them clear boundaries, rules, limitations and conditioning good behavior. First of all, always remain calm and be assertive. You also must be consistent. Don't *sometimes* let them jump up to greet you and sometimes make them stay down. It's confusing for them and these habits will be hard to break. (Jumping up on people is never acceptable and a habit that must be broken immediately.) Secondly, don't treat them like humans. No counter tops thieving, jumping on furniture, etc. Third, make them work for treats, toys, affection. Simply making them sit before meals and treats is setting a boundary and an expectation. Address any and all shortcomings, immediately. If you don't have the knowledge or ability to do this, we can help with trainers and mentors. Please speak to your state coordinator before bad habits continue or start and then need to be broken.

CREATE ROUTINES

Creating a routine will also help your dog feel more comfortable. Schedule his feeding, walks, sleep and play time. The sooner you establish a routine, the better you both will feel. A feeding schedule will help if your dog is not house trained yet. Routines build confidence by the dog knowing what to expect from you.

OBEDIENCE TRAINING

There are many schools of thought on ways to obedience train. The simplest is positive reward training. The dog does something right, the dog gets a treat and praised. Some tips are, keep commands to simple, single words, be repetitive, train often in short sessions, associate commands with hand gestures, celebrate with tons of praise, and always keep training fun!



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HOUSE TRAINING (Potty Training)

Most rescue dogs will have at least one accident in the house. Some lived outside their whole lives and were never taught, others were never taught properly, and others were taught but don't know your home and what is expected. Either way, I feel house training a rescue is much easier to do than a puppy. First, assess your dog's ability to hold it and how often/when he goes. This will help when creating a routine for walks, meals, and yard time. Control the dog's diet and intake. Feed meals at the same time and limit treats. Adjust his diet if the dogs stool is loose. Praise him when he goes where he is supposed to. NEVER discipline a dog for going in the house. This will actually be counterproductive and most likely he will not understand why he's being disciplined. If caught in the act, simply and firmly say NO and take the dog outside immediately.

OBSERVE AND ADJUST

Continually watch your foster for how he reacts in different situations, with different people, and to different stimuli. Make adjustments to how you approach these situations to ease any stresses the dog may have. Does the dog start to shake when you attempt to brush him? Does he get too excited around children? Does he tuck his tail between his legs and lower his head when certain people approach? Try to figure out what the dog's stresses are, what his triggers are. Once recognized, then we can address them so we can work to overcome these stresses and inadequacies. We will need to figure out where his line is, press it slowly while avoiding certain situations. Ease him slowly into these situations to desensitize him and build his confidence. Not recognizing these issues, not addressing them, and not being sensitive to his issues will never help him overcome his insecurities. A scared dog or one that feels cornered can react negatively and even bite.

TAKE NOTES

Write notes daily on what and how your foster dog does in situations. Little quirks, reactions, likes, dislikes, stresses, triggers, body languages, things that make him happy, and anything else you witness. They are all vital observations. All information is useful and will tell the rescue about the dog. What sometimes may seem inconsequential, may reveal to us a great deal about the dog. Our mission is to pair the dog with the perfect owner in a perfect forever home. Your observations are crucial for helping us to achieve this mission.



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YOUR RESIDENT DOGS

Please don't forget about your resident dogs during all this. They deserve the same love they've always received. Especially now that there is a new dog in the house.

***PACK LEADER (definition) aka Alpha**

For thousands of millennia, dogs have been pack animals. The Pack Leader was the top dog. This dog lead the pack to food and protected the members of the pack. This dog helped to fulfill all the requirements the pack needed to survive and thrive. Since we have domesticated dogs, we have become their pack. Dogs are content to spend their lives following a pack leader. It is ingrained in their nature. This is why dogs and humans make the perfect partnership. You must assert yourself as the Pack Leader. As the pack leader you want to be calm, assertive, set rules, and encourage good behavior. You are NOT trying to dominate the dog. If you do not become the pack leader, the dog may instinctively want to fill that void. This could lead to unwanted behavior such as aggression or guarding. Your dog is counting on you, as Pack Leader, to provide, safety, security, boundaries and care.

AFTER the FIRST SEVEN DAYS

Your foster should start to be relaxing and settling in. Behavior issues will be popping up. Address them immediately.

HOME & OTHER PETS

You can start to give your foster more freedom around the house. Your foster can have more and more interactions with your other pets. You must supervise these interactions. As the days pass, you can let them go for longer periods unsupervised.

OTHER STIMULI

You should start to slowly expose your foster to new things, places and people. Walks around other people, animals and situations while observing the dog's reactions to these situations. Stop and back off if the dog is showing signs of stress.



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BAD BEHAVIORS

It is not normal when the dog's behavior is destructive, disruptive, or places people or other pets at risk. Addressing these behaviors is critical. If needed, there is more descriptive information and help online to assist with these behaviors. Never punish or discipline a dog. Positive train your dog to act correctly. Never hit a dog. Only good things come from your hands, like treats, praise and pets. Your state coordinator and others in the rescue have most likely seen most of these bad behaviors before and can help with suggestions to eliminate these behaviors.

1. Humping

Humping can happen for several reasons. Both males and females will hump. Hormones will drive unneutered males to hump but most hump due to excitement or over stimulation. Dominant dogs will hump other dogs to show their dominance. Solutions are to neuter or to redirect the behavior.

2. Jumping Up

Jumping up or putting two paws on you is an issue. Especially when it is a bigger dog. It does usually come from an excitement to see the person. If this is an issue, push the dog off of you and tell them no. Keep a Four-on-the-Floor expectation by not giving the dog attention until all paws are on the ground and sitting. As soon as all paws are down, give him the attention he is seeking. This is the reward he is looking for. He will quickly understand the quicker he gets into position, the quicker he gets love.

3. Leash Pulling

Teaching a dog to walk calmly on a leash is extremely important for your sanity, and the dog's safety. A dog that walks you is exhausting and not relaxing. Dogs can get excited or stressed when taken out of the house with all the different sights, smells, and sounds. Their senses are in overdrive. Throw in seeing another dog, person, or squirrel and controlling them becomes close to impossible.

Swap a regular leash for a training leash or a leash with a second loop close to the clasp. This will help keep him in control and keep him at your side. If the dogs gets excited just by seeing the leash, put it on and off him several times a day even when not going for walks. This will help disassociate the leash with walks. Start to tackle pulling even before leaving the house. If he starts to pull as you head outside the door, turn around and go back in. Repeat as necessary until he tires of this game and calms. Do this every time leaving the house. If he starts to pull while walking, come to a standstill. Start again when the pulling stops or turn around and go in the opposite direction he wants



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to go. Being consistent is the key here. Have patience, it may take a while to get anywhere. Reward him with treats and praise when he walks calmly.

Sometimes No-Pull harnesses, choke collars, prong collars, or gentle leaders are necessary for extreme pullers or larger dogs. Regular harnesses can be useful in some cases but may promote pulling. (We fully recommend a harness for car rides to attach a seat belt restraint to!)

Never snap or jerk a leash unless it is an emergency. This could injure the dog's neck.

NEVER use a retractable leash. They will not help to control a dog at all and the handles can become missiles when jerked from your hand. If slightly more freedom is needed for the dog a 25' lead works just fine.

Sometimes dogs will sit and protest. Lure the dog with treats to get him going. Never yank a dog to get him to walk.

4. High Energy

High energy is not a bad behavior itself. High energy dogs need to get their energy out or may get into trouble. Take long walks, schedule playdates, play fetch, take the dog swimming, use mind games or puzzles. A tired dog is a well behaved dog.

5. Stubbornness

Stubborn, ignoring or aloof dogs were allowed to act this way in the past. Training and creating a better bond will help solve this issue. Use treats or rewards while training. Work on focus training and recall training. Keep training fun!

6. Shaking/Nervousness/Shyness/ Submissiveness/Excitement Urination

These are all signs of insecurities. Dogs that feel scared or cornered may bite out of fear. Have patience with them. Always remain calm and watch your reactions to the dog. Don't overreact to any situation. Bond with them and provide a secure environment. Show your dog it is cared for and protected.

7. Separation Anxiety

When dogs are disruptive or destructive when left alone. Dogs might urinate, defecate, bark, howl, chew, dig or try to escape. These could be brought on by insecurities, a sudden loss of an owner, sudden change in guardian, or schedule change. When treating a dog with separation anxiety, the goal is to resolve the dog's underlying anxiety by teaching him to enjoy, or at least tolerate, being left alone. This is accomplished by setting things up so that the dog experiences the situation that provokes his anxiety, namely being alone, without experiencing fear or anxiety. For



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example, try giving your dog a Kong stuffed with something really tasty, like low-fat cream cheese, spray cheese or low-fat peanut butter, frozen banana and cottage cheese, or canned dog food and kibble. A Kong can even be frozen so that getting all the food out takes even more of your dog's time. Be sure to remove these special toys as soon as you return home so that your dog only has access to them and the high-value foods inside when he's by himself. More extreme cases may require an animal behaviorist.

8. Barking/Howling

Dogs communicate through howling and barking. There are many types of barking and too many reasons to list here. Observing and recognizing the type of barking the dog is doing will lead to a solution.

9. Destructive

There are many reasons dogs will be destructive. Anxiety, stress, hunger, teething, and lack of stimulation are a few. You must try to figure out why the dog is chewing and being destructive before a cure can be found. **DO NOT** punish the dog. This **WILL NOT** solve or change anything and the dog will not know why he is being punished.

10. Aggressiveness/ Resource Guarding

Seek assistance from your state coordinator and the rescue immediately for this! Most dog aggression comes out of fear or insecurity. It is not the dogs fault, it is the (past) owners fault. This behavior must be remedied immediately. A trainer may need to get involved. Types of aggression include: Territorial, Protective, Possessive, Fear, Defensive, and Social.

These are not the only behavior issue you may experience. Speak openly and seek guidance from your state coordinator and the rescue.

CONCLUSION

Your role as a foster parent to a dog is a crucial one to the rescue. Foster families are usually the first to find out about the pet's personality. You may even be the first to teach your foster dog basic house manners, making them more appealing to potential adopters. You are the eyes of the rescue so we have the knowledge to place the dog with a home that will be his perfect forever home. You sometimes will be the first stable environment for a dog. You sometimes will be the first person the dog has ever bonded with. You sometimes will be the first person to give it consistent meals. Whatever the case, you will need to pass



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your observations onto its potential adopters so they can continue your hard work in creating a fantastic, well-mannered, well-adjusted dog. Do not take this task lightly. Even though you love animals, love dogs, and love the breed, to be good at anything does take some work. A roof and some food doesn't make a good foster. It takes a combination of love, patience, understanding, dog knowledge, and the ability to recognize issues in dogs and work towards resolving these issues. Some issues may never be resolved, but can be managed.

These dogs that come in with issues, have the opportunity to have their lives turned around. It is our responsibility to do so. Done wrong, you could make matters worse and wreck their second chance at a good life. Dogs with multiple bites on their records are unadoptable. This rescue has many fosters with varying levels of knowledge and experience. Many times we have had to move dogs that are not right for the foster situation that they are in. There is no shame in admitting that a certain dog is too much for you or that the situation isn't working. We will find the dog a new foster.

The state coordinators and rescue volunteers are a wealth of information and knowledge. They are great to bounce issues and ideas off of, and are a collective "think tank" when it comes to difficult issues. Keep in touch with your state coordinator and let them know what is going well, and what's not going so well. Keep notes on your experience, small concerns, quirks, and habits of your foster dog. Sometimes small things are forgotten after a few days that may be important when deciding a permanent home for him. Keeping in touch with the coordinators and the rescue is one of the most important aspects of fostering.

One of the most difficult parts of being a foster is the day the dog goes to its forever home. (If you haven't decided that YOU are that dog's forever home) The hard work you have done, the bond you have created, and the growth and changes you have watched the dog go through make it difficult to let the dog go. A piece of your heart leaves with the dog. It is all worth it though when you see how well the dog has adjusted in its forever home and it's at that point you know you have been a part something very special.

We could not do this without you! You have selflessly decided to make room in your home for a dog in need, to aid in the dogs recovery, and help him transition to a new life. You may not change the world by fostering a dog, but you will change that dog's world.

Thank you for helping these dogs!

The Team at Newfoundland Club of New England Rescue and Referral Service



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Your Commitment

I have read and understand “Rescue Dog Fostering 101” and am willing to make every effort, within my knowledge and ability, to follow its guidance to provide a safe and secure home and to assist in developing a well-mannered, well-adjusted dog.

Signed

Date

Printed Name



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The 3 Days, 3 Weeks, 3 Month Rule of Adopting a Rescue Dog

The 3-3-3 rule is a general guideline, every dog is unique and will adjust differently. Give your dog space and allow him to go at his own pace.

3D



In the first 3 days,

- Feeling overwhelmed
- May be scared and unsure of what is going on
- Not comfortable enough to be "himself"
- May not want to eat or drink
- Shut down and want to curl up in his crate or hide under a table
- Testing the boundaries

3W



After 3 weeks,

- Starting to settle in
- Feeling more comfortable
- Realizing this could possibly be his forever home
- Figured out his environment
- Getting into a routine
- Lets his guard down and may start showing his true personality
- Behavior issues may start showing up

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3M



After 3 months,

- Finally completely comfortable in his home.
- Building trust and a true bond
- Gained a complete sense of security with his new family
- Set in a routine

